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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AMARI (Tunisia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6 (Vol. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 15. Economic Commission for Africa

Section 16. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Section 17. Economic Commission for Europe

Section 18. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Section 19. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Mselle, to introduce sections 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

2. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on sections 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the proposed programme budget, on the regional commissions, said that that Committee welcomed the measures taken to streamline the commissions' organizational structures, which, in its opinion, should be compatible with administrative responsibility for programme implementation. A greater effort must be made to see that the mode of programme implementation chosen ensured the best use of available resources and averted duplication of activity. In addition, the executive offices of the commissions must take care not to compromise their monitoring and supervisory role by participating too extensively in the carrying out of substantive activities.

3. Redeployment of staff resources should be based on programme needs, not personnel policies. Moreover, the intergovernmental bodies concerned should review in depth the extensive publications programmes of all the commissions. The level of resources requested for programme support in several of the commissions, which appeared excessive, also required review. Expenditure on travel, especially travel connected with the collection of data, should be monitored more closely.

4. The level of extrabudgetary resources received had declined dramatically. It should be determined whether the decline reflected a general trend or whether the cost-effectiveness of operations in some regions needed to be improved in order to attract extrabudgetary resources. The infrastructure and number of staff involved in extrabudgetary activities should be in line with the extrabudgetary resources available.

5. Several regional commissions had built conference facilities at their headquarters, and the headquarters rule should apply to them. In the next

proposed programme budget, the Secretary-General should provide statistics on the meeting programmes of all the commissions.

6. The Advisory Committee was recommending acceptance of the request to establish one P-4 post for the follow-up to the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), respectively.

7. In considering the proposed programme budget, the Advisory Committee had taken into consideration the report submitted by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services with respect to ECA, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

8. With regard to section 15 A, Economic Commission for Africa, the Advisory Committee was recommending acceptance of the request for the establishment of two additional P-3 posts and three additional Local level posts to provide support for the newly constructed conference facilities in Addis Ababa. It would be necessary to clarify to what extent the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services had been implemented with respect to centralizing the function of financial authorization for all ECA funds. In addition, the Advisory Committee was still awaiting the clarification it had requested concerning the role of the Executive Secretary of ECA, the ECA secretariat and the committees of intergovernmental experts of the multinational programming and operational centres (MULPOCs) in programme formulation and implementation. It should be noted that the resources for the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and the African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders had been maintained at the same level as for the preceding biennium, pending submission by the Secretary-General of a report on funding for regional institutes.

9. With regard to section 16, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Advisory Committee commented that ESCAP had chosen the thematic approach to its programme of work and would review its secretariat structure in 1997. The Advisory Committee hoped that its comments in paragraph V.3 of the ACABQ report would be taken into account in that connection.

10. Referring to section 17, Economic Commission for Europe, he said that the total resources available to ECE exceeded the $47.7 million indicated in paragraph V.30 of the Advisory Committee's report, given that resources for administration, conference services and general services for ECE were included in other sections of the budget. The Advisory Committee was recommending approval of the establishment of two additional posts, one at the P-5 level and the other at the P-3 level. It had been learned after the preparation of the proposed programme budget that ECE would receive additional extrabudgetary resources from UNDP in an amount of approximately $3 million.

11. In connection with section 18, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Advisory Committee had been informed that ECLAC had adopted a sectoral approach in its programme of work. The Advisory Committee hoped that

close coordination between divisions would be maintained to avoid duplication of effort. ECLAC being the only regional commission with somewhat limited conference facilities, the estimated requirements for general temporary assistance and the rental of conference facilities were justified. Since considerable amounts had been proposed for data-processing services and equipment, the Advisory Committee trusted that more would be accomplished with fewer resources.

12. With regard to section 19, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Advisory Committee had taken note of the possible transfer of the ESCWA secretariat from Amman to Beirut. No provision had been made for that purpose in the proposed programme budget since consultations had still been under way when the Advisory Committee was preparing its report. It recommended that the Secretary-General should submit a report on the administrative and financial implications of such a transfer. It was also recommending acceptance of the request for reclassification of a Local level post to the Professional category.

13. The Advisory Committee hoped that in future the narrative relating to the activities under the sections in question would be more specific and less theoretical.

14. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations on the need to streamline the organizational structure of the regional commissions and to clearly define their objectives, reduce their administrative costs and limit the overlapping and duplication of tasks. With regard to the problem of duplication, the regional and country programmes of various United Nations specialized agencies needed to be reviewed. Restructuring would strengthen the regional commissions and enhance the effectiveness of their work.

15. The Russian Federation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the publications programmes of the regional commissions should be reviewed in order to ensure maximum effectiveness in responding to the interests of consumers with regard to content, quality and cost.

16. The Russian Federation also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the level of resources requested for programme support activities was excessive. The expenditure structures of the regional commissions needed to be streamlined and the savings realized in administrative costs redeployed to programme activities. The Russian Federation, moreover, agreed with the Advisory Committee that efforts should be made to take full advantage of certain technological innovations, such as remote conference servicing, in order to achieve savings in travel expenditure.

17. Lastly, the Russian Federation believed that more in-depth consideration should be given to the question of conference services. There should be strict compliance with the General Assembly's provisions with regard to the organization of meetings at regional headquarters, in view of the considerable sums that had been expended not long before on the construction of facilities and the provision of conference services in various regional commissions. However, the possibility of organizing conferences away from regional

headquarters would not be ruled out, provided that the cost was borne by the host country.

Section 15. Economic Commission for Africa

18. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) noted the reduction in the extrabudgetary resources proposed for ECA and said that the Secretary-General should use his influence, not only as the highest administrative functionary of the Organization but also as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), to mobilize additional extrabudgetary resources in support of the Commission. He should also approach various multilateral agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and urge them to consider increasing their support for the Commission.

19. He shared the Advisory Committee's view that the allocation of resources among the subprogrammes of ECA should reflect the priority assigned to each subprogramme. Certain subprogrammes that were designated as priority in the proposed programme budget had received less resources than other less urgent ones. That situation should be rectified.

20. Uganda had repeatedly observed that disproportionate emphasis was being placed on economic development in ECA programmes in comparison with the social sector, which was also an integral part of sustainable development. He urged the Secretary-General to try to redress that imbalance in the activities to be implemented during the biennium.

21. Uganda welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal, which had been approved by the Advisory Committee, to continue support for the activities of the African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI). At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Institute was provided with adequate funds and to submit proposals for additional resources in the context of the proposed programme budget. He therefore hoped that the Secretary-General would prepare fresh proposals in response to the General Assembly's request.

22. He also hoped that the Secretary-General would use his influence to overcome the administrative bottlenecks affecting ECA, which had, to some extent, exacerbated the Institute's administrative problems.

23. Uganda also welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal, which had been approved by the Advisory Committee, concerning financial support for the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), and hoped that the Fifth Committee would also approve it.

24. He welcomed the streamlining of the organizational chart of the ECA secretariat which the Secretariat had prepared, although further improvements were still necessary. He would be grateful for additional information on the establishment of a section on capacity-building within the Social Development Division, since capacity-building was related to both the social and economic fields. Such a section should perhaps be located in another part of the organizational structure.

25. Mr. GODLEY (United States of America) said that, since the regional commissions did not have unique and compelling missions, their programme activities often duplicated those of other international organizations. The commissions should focus their activities on programmes that provided practical benefits to their members, especially those from developing countries, and eliminate or scale back activities that were not unique or offered little value added to their regions. The number of intergovernmental meetings and publications that regional commissions generated should be reduced to the minimum needed for coordination. In general, significant savings could be made in regional commission resources devoted to servicing conferences, hiring consultants and staff travel.

26. The budgets of the regional commissions could be reduced in the range of 25 per cent without adversely affecting programme delivery and services. In that regard, the United Nations should provide clearer explanations from the programming viewpoint regarding what could and should be done by the regional commissions that could not be done from Headquarters or by another international organization. A more holistic approach was required to evaluate relevance, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness.

27. With respect to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), its budget totalled $78.4 million and the Commission proposed a staff of 608, 226 Professionals and 382 General Service staff. His delegation did not support the proposals for additional posts because it believed that the functions of the posts proposed could and should be absorbed within the Commission's existing staffing table. Moreover, in order to reduce meeting expenses, the policy-making bodies of ECA should meet biennially like those of the other regional commissions.

28. The review of the ECA budget had identified areas of overlap and duplication. For example, some activities of subprogramme 1 duplicated activities of other agencies and other ECA programmes, such as trade development and statistical and information systems development. There also appeared to be duplication between the activities of subprogramme 2 and those of other agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Trade Centre and the World Bank. With respect to subprogramme 5, many projects appeared to duplicate the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Therefore, that subprogramme should be abolished. In addition to eliminating duplication, rationalization could also be achieved in the Commission's work programme by giving priority to subprogrammes in such areas as development administration and management, infrastructural and structural transformation and women in development, areas in which ECA had performed unique and useful functions which should be encouraged.

29. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that Egypt had advocated decentralization in order to strengthen the functioning of the regional commissions. The resources that were allocated to the regional commissions under the proposed programme budget were insufficient and, in view of the many reductions in extrabudgetary resources, decentralization would be impossible to implement if that trend continued. Africa had made considerable progress in the economic field, where ECA played a very crucial role. Moreover, support should continue to be given

to the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP).

30. Mr. AKPLOGAN (Benin) said that his delegation was concerned at the decline in extrabudgetary resources received by ECA, which would adversely affect the execution of the Commission's programmes. The Fifth Committee should consider redressing that situation by recommending an increase in the level of resources proposed in the proposed programme budget, in view of the scope of the outstanding problems and the activities being undertaken to solve the crisis facing the continent. In view of the importance of ECA for regional cooperation activities, the Commission should receive adequate resources to enable it to carry out its work.

31. Mr. ZENNA (Ethiopia) said that Africa's economic situation was worsening. Trade and investments had declined while the debt burden, population growth rates and poverty had increased. ECA, the principal United Nations agency in Africa since 1958, had greatly contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Development, to the activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa and of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa as well as to the implementation of the Abuja Declaration. He was disturbed to learn that ECA did not have sufficient resources to deal with the serious problems facing Africa and felt that the level of such resources should be increased considerably. He agreed with the Advisory Committee that the causes for the decline in extrabudgetary resources should be identified in order to find a solution to that situation.

32. ECA should continue to be governed by the provisions enacted by the General Assembly concerning the holding of sessions away from the established headquarters. In that regard, the conference servicing capacity at the Commission's headquarters should be increased and the proposed two new posts of electrical engineer and mechanical engineer at the P-3 level and the three additional posts at the local level would be the minimum required to provide technical maintenance and support for the newly constructed conference facilities in Addis Ababa.

33. Moreover, while his delegation understood the Advisory Committee's opinion that, as a result of technological advances, travel expenditure could be reduced, it wondered to what extent Africa had access to such technologies.

34. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Uganda and expressed his country's particular concern at the decline in extrabudgetary resources for ECA.

35. Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania) endorsed the Advisory Committee's view that the administrative efficiency of ECA should be improved and urged the Secretary-General to pay special attention to that problem. His delegation was particularly concerned at the decline in extrabudgetary resources received by ECA. In view of the multisectoral nature of Africa's problems, programmes tended to have a multisectoral approach and at first glance the complementarity of tasks could be mistaken for duplication. The proposed programmes were adequate and the Commission's work would have a more concrete

impact if sufficient resources were made available and ECA adequately carried out its supervisory and administrative functions.

36. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that her delegation recognized the great importance for the African continent of the work of ECA, particularly in view of the difficult economic conditions currently being experienced by African countries, which should receive maximum attention. Accordingly she was concerned by the decline in resources under the proposed budget, since that might not allow implementation of planned activities.

37. She took note with satisfaction of the continued support over the biennium for the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

38. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that his delegation would welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the suggestion by the representative of Benin that a decision should be taken to substantially increase budget resources for ECA so that it would not be so reliant on extrabudgetary resources, which were unpredictable and were not always available when needed. The ratio of budgetary to extrabudgetary resources was almost 1:10, an infelicitous state of affairs. He agreed that it would be necessary to hold meetings to consider various questions; in the case of ECA, the General Assembly itself had recognized the critical situation of Africa and the need for ongoing dialogue. He trusted that theoretical benchmarks would not be used to judge the frequency of meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa.

39. Mr. HALBWACHS (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the programme of work of ECA had been considered and adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers and that all the activities included in the budget were supported by corresponding mandates. With regard to the distribution of resources among subprogrammes, there was no automatic correlation between levels of resources and prioritization. The level of resources reflected, rather, the volume of work and the number of mandates. If a comparison was made of the distribution of resources for the biennium 1994-1995 and those proposed for the upcoming biennium it could be seen that subprogrammes 2 and 3, which were high priority, had proportionately more resources in the biennium 1996-1997 than in the current biennium.

40. With reference to the comments made regarding the structure of ECA, the new Executive Secretary had assumed his functions after the proposed programme budget had been prepared, but was undertaking a series of restructuring exercises, and there was a possibility that changes would be introduced along the lines of many of the comments made on the rationalization of the administrative structure, and that there would be greater emphasis on the allocation of resources to programmes.

41. The decline in extrabudgetary resources was not only a phenomenon affecting ECA, most of the offices receiving UNDP technical cooperation funds were also affected.

42. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that it would be useful for the Director of the Budget Division to indicate whether, and, if so, when, the General Assembly would be informed of the measures proposed by the Executive Secretary.

43. Mr. HALBWACHS (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the measures were in the course of adoption and that the General Assembly would certainly be informed. Although it was not yet known when, that would occur as specific approval of the Assembly was required.

44. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 15 and that it would be referred to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 16. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

45. Mr. SHIN (Republic of Korea) said that the proposed programme budget for ESCAP for the biennium 1996-1997 reflected a 0.45 per cent increase over the previous biennium. He welcomed the 2.4 per cent increase in the budget for the programme of work, which would contribute to efficient programme delivery under programme 31 of the medium-term plan.

46. He wished to draw attention to the fact that the percentage of the total population of the Asia and Pacific region living below the poverty line had reached 56.1 per cent in 1992. Special attention should be paid to that serious situation in the proposed programme budget. Accordingly, he supported the proposal to establish one P-5 post for the Chief of the Rural Development Section and to redeploy one P-4 post and one P-2 post from programme support and one P-3 post from subprogramme 1 to strengthen substantive activities under subprogramme 3. He welcomed the endorsement of that proposal by the Advisory Committee.

47. Lastly, he noted that extrabudgetary resources funded by UNDP and UNFPA had decreased significantly in the case of ESCAP, in particular for subprogramme 3. In that regard he pointed out that the figures did not reflect the actual situation of poverty in the Asia and Pacific region.

48. Mrs. ARAGON (Philippines) said that her delegation supported the budget estimates under section 16 and hoped that the section would receive the support of Member States when the budget was adopted. The regional commissions had an extremely important role, in which connection she recalled the ministerial declaration issued in New York on 29 September 1995 by the Group of 77 recognizing the increasingly important role of the regional commissions in providing assistance to the countries of each region, developing countries in particular, in the implementation of the various recommendations of the major conferences on development. Accordingly, she trusted that adequate resources would be allocated for the work of the regional commissions.

49. Mr. JU Kuilin (China) said that the economy of the region of Asia and the Pacific was very active and that major changes had taken place. ESCAP had done an excellent job of promoting the economic and social development of the region and would continue to do so. In particular, owing to the ongoing reform of the United Nations, certain tasks previously carried out at Headquarters had recently been delegated to the regional commissions which, in consequence, were becoming more important. For that reason there was a need to strengthen various aspects of the work of ESCAP. His delegation would welcome the allocation of additional resources to ESCAP, and, in particular, would like to see poverty

alleviation and aid to the least developed countries included among ESCAP's priorities.

50. He fully shared the opinions expressed in paragraphs V.26 and V.27 of the report of the Advisory Committee. He supported the allocation of additional resources and the establishment of the new posts and hoped that the programmes would continue to be strengthened in the future.

51. Mr. GODLEY (United States of America) said that there were several areas of duplication and overlap in the work of ESCAP, that might be scaled back or eliminated without any adverse impact on the programme of work of the Commission.

52. Since the Commission currently met annually, consideration might be given to the possibility of biennializing its meetings. Moreover, Executive direction and management might be scaled back by a reduction in the number of General Service posts.

53. The goals and activities of the subprogramme for regional cooperation were too broad and ill defined. If those goals were more clearly articulated, the regional cooperation programme could be cut back, since a large part of that programme seemed to duplicate the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Furthermore, there was no doubt that the statistics subprogramme could be rationalized by a reduction in the number of publications and meetings.

54. Much of the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries subprogramme, which focused on analysis and assistance in areas of interest to the least developed countries, duplicated the work of UNCTAD and probably also overlapped with the transport and communications subprogramme of ESCAP itself.

55. Programme support was overstaffed and was, perhaps, not making efficient use of its resources. The fact that the Commission was devoting 50 per cent of its budget to servicing meetings probably meant that it was holding too many of them.

56. Mr. CHINVANNO (Thailand) said that ESCAP had played an important and useful role in the development of the region and should be strengthened. His delegation therefore supported the level of funding requested by the Secretary-General.

57. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) associated himself with the delegations which supported the budget estimates for ESCAP. It was advisable to increase funding since the demands placed on the Secretariat had increased as a result of the increase in membership and the expanded geographical scope of the Commission.

58. Mr. HALBWACHS (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), referring to the number of meetings held by ESCAP, pointed out that, until recently, the structure of the Commission had included nine main bodies and seven special committees. That structure had been considerably simplified and, at present,

there were five committees and two bodies. That represented an important achievement which should be recognized.

59. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Commission had completed its first reading of section 16 of the proposed programme budget and had decided to refer it to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 17: Economic Commission for Europe

60. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to the activities of the Commission, including assistance to countries with economies in transition. Unfortunately, the urgent nature of the work of ECE was not adequately reflected in the proposed programme budget. Neither was there any consideration of the fact that, in recent years, the Commission had taken numerous measures to increase the efficiency of its work; that had caused the Advisory Committee to observe, in paragraph V.3 of its report, that ECE was the only regional commission which had made great progress in improving its organizational structure.

61. The allocation of resources to the Commission had remained virtually "frozen" in real terms for 15 years despite the fact that its membership had increased from 34 to 55, in other words, by over 60 per cent, and despite the emergence of new obstacles and problems related to the radical changes in the economic development models of the new democracies of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In that regard, there was a question whether the Organization applied the same standards to the interests of different regions.

62. Questions also arose with regard to the allocation of resources. In the first place, it was not clear why it was proposed to increase expenditure on administrative and general services and executive direction and management and at the same time reduce in real terms the funding for the programme of work. In the opinion of his delegation, the reverse should be the case. If one examined the breakdown of the programmes, it was difficult to agree to the reduction in resources for programmes such as those on energy, industry and technology and agriculture and timber. It would be helpful if the Secretariat could submit additional information in that regard.

63. His delegation supported the establishment of two new posts, as recommended by the Advisory Committee. At the same time, it wished to draw the attention of the Secretariat to the need to adopt measures for the timely filling of vacancies since, as indicated in paragraph V.9 of the report of the Advisory Committee, the vacancy rate was still excessive.

64. Finally, his delegation wished to ask the Secretariat if further information was available with regard to the matter referred to in paragraph V.33 of the report of the Advisory Committee, which stated that ECE would receive additional extrabudgetary resources from UNDP.

65. Mr. GODLEY (United States of America) said that certain areas of the work performed by ECE overlapped with the work of other institutions and could be scaled back or eliminated without any adverse impact on its programme of work. With regard to the Environment subprogramme, savings could be achieved by

reducing the demands on the ECE secretariat and discarding non-priority tasks such as the servicing of certain environmental conventions, a duty that could be transferred to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). With regard to the Transport subprogramme, savings could be achieved by reducing the number of meetings in that field.

66. With regard to the Statistics subprogramme, ECE had a comparative advantage since statistical information and better means of collecting it were urgently needed by the countries in transition in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, savings could be achieved by reducing the number of intergovernmental meetings, decreasing the analytical work on members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), whose economies were already studied in depth in that institution, and issuing certain publications less frequently. The activities of the Trade facilitation subprogramme could be centralized rather than pursued at the regional level as at present, which simply duplicated the work of UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

67. As far as the Economic analysis subprogramme was concerned, ECE also had a comparative advantage since the countries in transition in Eastern Europe needed particularly rigorous economic analysis. There, too, savings could be achieved by taking the same action as suggested for the Statistics subprogramme. Although the Energy subprogramme was very important for the economies in transition in Eastern Europe, it was not a priority area for ECE and savings could be achieved by reducing the number of working group meetings, workshops and sectoral reports.

68. Referring to the Development of international trade subprogramme, he said that, although assistance to Eastern Europe in the development of trade systems had been useful, organizations such as ITC, UNCTAD and WTO were far more competent in that sphere. Finally, OECD and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) could absorb much of the work of the Agriculture and timber subprogramme.

69. Mr. ABELIAN (Armenia) and Mr. MIHAI (Romania), endorsing the statement by the representative of the Russian Federation, asked the Secretariat to clarify the matter of the $3 million which UNDP was to contribute to ECE, and supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding the establishment of the two new posts proposed by the Secretary-General.

70. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said he was puzzled by the proposals to make cuts in priority areas of the programme of work of ECE, namely the subprogrammes devoted to the environment, statistics, economic analysis, trade facilitation and transport; activities under those subprogrammes were vitally important for the countries in transition in Eastern Europe. In addition, he noted with concern the proposals for reductions in the resources allocated to subprogrammes 8 (Industry and technology), 6 (Energy) and 9 (Agriculture and timber), and asked for further clarification in that regard.

71. He associated himself with the remarks that had been made regarding the transfer of resources from UNDP to ECE and endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the establishment of two new posts.

72. Mr. CHUDY (Poland) said that his delegation would comment on the recommendation regarding the establishment of two new posts during informal consultations.

73. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, with regard to the recommendation concerning the establishment of two new posts, in paragraph V.33 of the Advisory Committee's report, the obvious way to proceed would be for the Secretary-General's representatives to ask for more detailed information from UNDP.

74. Mr. HALBWACHS (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he would liaise with UNDP and ECE to obtain additional details regarding the transfer of the $3 million.

75. With regard to the overall reduction in resources allocated to the programme of work, he said that the cuts had been occasioned by two factors: first the decline in external publication costs and, second, the redistribution of a number of posts in the programme of work.

76. The justification for the increase in resources allocated to the Executive direction and management programme could be found in paragraph 17.11 of the proposed programme budget. The increase in programme support resources was in line with the commitment to improve office automation, which would have a positive impact on all the programmes.

77. Finally, with regard to the redistribution of programme of work resources, all he could say was that the concentration of resources in subprogrammes 1 to 5 was in keeping with the established priorities.

78. Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh) said he would appreciate further clarification as to whether the $3 million to be transferred from UNDP to ECE would come from the resources earmarked for the Programme's regional activities.

79. The CHAIRMAN said that, as indicated by the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, information on that matter would be provided at a later date. He took it that the Committee had concluded its first reading of section 17 of the draft programme budget and wished to refer it to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.